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AUTHOR Meinhof, Ulrike Hanna
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ABSTRACT

The concept of authenticity in foreign language pedagogy is discussed with particular reference to the methodology of instructing through the medium of authentic texts. It is suggested that the use of authentic texts in a classroom setting actually deauthenticates those elements that made the texts originally authentic; i.e., placing them in a classroom falsifies their linguistic and social environment, their inscribed addressee, and their function as communicative acts. The interconnected process of authenticating and making comprehensible, by presenting some of the key strategies in the classroom, is discussed. The following types of strategies are described: activating situational knowledge; predicting the text; juxtaposing texts; and cognitive parallels. Contains 13 references. (LB)

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PREDICTING TEXTS: ASPECTS OF A STRATEGIC MODEL OF TEXT COMPREHENSION

Ulrike Hanna Meinhof
University of Sussex

The concept of authenticity (Breen 1986) has caught foreign language pedagogy in a seemingly unsolvable paradox. On the one hand, the theoretical definition of language as fully encoded socio-cultural behaviour, as discourse, calls for 'authentic' texts as the best source of such language. Only original pieces of written or spoken language which occurred naturally between native speakers can be accepted as genuine communicative acts. Since the language of these acts was not invented by a textbook writer to fulfil a particular function but actually occurred, these texts are simultaneous realisations of all communicative functions by their very nature. As such they avoid the much discussed dilemma endemic to notional/functional syllabus design, that form cannot be predicted from function (see for example Widdowson 1983, Meinhof 1984).

On the other hand, the methodology of instructing through the medium of such texts deauthenticates precisely those elements which made them originally authentic: placing them in a classroom falsifies their linguistic and social environment, their inscribed addressee, their function as communicative acts.

Yet writers of articles and of textbooks have claimed authenticity for vastly divergent practices. According to some sources authenticity is not negatively affected by the reprinting of an original extract in a language manual, by shortening, editing or reformulating of parts of the text: not even by the writing of material for the relevant linguistic target level. (For some German examples, see Gutschow's call for a 'cleaned up colloquial language', a 'bereinigte Umgangssprache', Gutschow 1977 p7: an adjustment of the language to the learner's level. Gerdes 1984: cutting down of originals to an ideal textbook length. Kormann 1977; Drochner & Fohr 1985.) Even the best of practices where great care is taken not to

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tamper with the original (see for example Edelhoff 1985, Hog et al 1984) cannot counteract the dilemma of the texts appearing outside their normal sociocultural environment. Taking authenticity in a number of possible ways, as authenticity of language, of situation, of context, of interaction between reader and writer or speaker and listener, most of the so-called authentic texts in our classrooms fail on all accounts, but all of them fall somewhere short of real authenticity. This does not necessarily render the use of such texts pedagogically useless. But given that authenticity is such a dubious concept, are they still worth all the trouble caused by the other dilemmas intrinsic to the use of such material: their linguistic difficulty and their lack of gradability?

What seems like a paradox from the discussion so far is not however unsolvable. It is true that if we accept original texts as the best source of culturally encoded language for the classroom, two key problems will have to be overcome: 1. linguistic difficulty; 2. inauthenticity. But interestingly, these two problems are interrelated, so that what helps solve the one equally solves the other. In other words, original texts are difficult to comprehend for the very reasons which cause them to be least authentic: by virtue of the extraction of the discourse from its natural time and place of occurrence, by the changing of its linguistic context, by the violation of its original communicative function. And inversely: attempting to reauthenticate original texts for and with our learners by a number of pedagogic strategies also makes them linguistically accessible.

The following paper will explain this interconnected process of authenticating and making comprehensible by presenting some of the key strategies used in the classroom.

Activating Situational Knowledge

Strategy no. 1: Activation of all information learners have, can infer, or can compile about the situation type which a text encodes.

Text, or discourse, is a (unique) realisation in language of a (typifiable) situation. Situation types are determined by three parameters: tenor, field, and mode (eg Halliday 1978). Tenor refers to the participants, field to the ongoing activity, inclusive of theme and topic, and mode to

the adopted channel and genre. All texts are simultaneously encoding all three, and all participants in natural discourse share knowledge about these three, albeit often unconsciously.

How can students gather knowledge about these three parameters if they are confronted with texts whose situation type is either not known at all, or unfamiliar, ie with texts outside their natural setting.

There are several different ways of attempting the recontextualising of separate texts, but one of the most striking for a foreign language classroom is very rarely discussed and practised: the involvement of learners themselves in the choice of the discourse they are to study. (For the most notable exception in literacy work, see Freire 1972.) By allowing the learners to participate in the collection and selection of the texts themselves, they are gaining access to textual and contextual information which would otherwise be obscured: for example information about the sources of the texts, the contexts in which they occur, their position in these contexts, their original length etc. Additionally by allowing the students' own interests to guide their choices we are avoiding a decision on their behalf of what might constitute their interests and 'needs'. Yet, we are not abandoning the pedagogically important possibility of influencing their choices by the sets of resources we are helping to provide. This search for the text can be divided into three stages: collection of material, selection of text, and juxtaposition of texts by contrast. All three stages will be framed by the three situational parameters of field, tenor and mode, priorising one of the three for the initial collection of material. A typical field based collection might for example juxtapose different texts about the same theme: pollution, or housing, or nuclear energy. Alternatively, the initial collection can be started from tenor criteria by collecting texts from or addressed to different groups. For example texts produced by or directed towards young people as against old, affluent vs poor, or women vs men. A mode based collection might start with different samples of the same text type, for example sets of newspapers or magazines, or sets of radio interviews. Either situational parameter can thus serve as starting point. But this priorisation of one of the three situational parameters for organising the initial collection of material must not overlook the essential aspect, that all texts are encoding all three parameters simultaneously. In the subsequent selection of sets of texts and their contrastive juxtaposition

those parameters which were neglected in the original should be incorporated or even foregrounded.

Example 1: Choosing texts

All this needs clarifying through practical examples. The teaching unit I want to present was developed with groups of university students of post O Level standard of German.

We began from a set of West German magazines (ie a mode based starting point). There are obvious advantages in the use of current issues of different magazines. They are relatively easy of access, they reflect mass concerns of the German public; they create and reinforce opinions, they inform and entertain; they have a clear sense of addressed readership built into every aspect of design, style, topic selection etc. The students were asked to choose one magazine each from a pile of about 30, take it home and return to class with (a) a content list of themes and topics covered in their issue (field criteria) and (b) a list of the categories of adverts in the magazines. In class the information was pooled, and from it the presumed readership of each magazine established (tenor criteria). To give some examples of the actual results worked out by the students themselves:

Spiegel — male and female professionals with slant towards male in responsible position, wide ranging interests in politics, economy, international affairs, culture, high spenders, international travellers, modern, social class 1-3, liberal to left (scale of 5)

Bild der Wissenschaft — predominantly male scientists and professionals close to natural sciences. Specific interest to keep up to date in all natural sciences, highly educated readership, social class 1 and 2

Brigitte — young middle aged women concerned with fashion, dieting, healthy living, interested in moderate feminist issues, relatively high spenders, social climbers, social class 2 and 3, liberal

Neue Post older women, mainly interested in health and royalty, very conservative, low spenders, social class 4 and 5

Other magazines analysed in this fashion were for example Stern, the youth journal Bravo, the men's magazine der Mann, the TV and radio journal Hör Zu, the satirical Titanic, the glossy horseriding journal Reiter Revue and several others.

The students then chose sets of texts for close reading. One example of a mode contrast: Students collected where possible the marriage offers from the small ads, selecting those they considered most typical/untypical for the type of readership they had presumed for their magazine. Another stage was the selection of articles about topics the students were interested in for future reading. One text from Spiegel, a text on pollution and its effects became the starting point for a field based selection of materials about the environment including selections from some of the magazines, but also other available sources such as newspapers, posters, political pamphlets, records etc. So the papers now became a resource for different texts all on the environment. Examples were:

1. several articles mainly but not exclusively from the more serious magazines on the dying forest, lead-free petrol, health issues, epidemiological graphs, agriculture, the Green Party and several others. Only a few of these texts were later selected for close reading. But the fact that it was so easy to find further examples of the same topic and in very different types of journals was in itself a reflection of the level of attention to environmental issues prevalent amongst Germans today, and this made its impact on the students.

2. adverts chosen according to whether the students felt the products were good or bad for the environment.

3. leading away from the magazines as a source, texts were collected from every possible available source including some in their mother tongue. Typical texts chosen were songs, pamphlets from the Green Party and Greenpeace, but also extracts from radio and TV.

It should be clear by now that a strategy of selecting texts according to the criteria given and in collaboration with the students is an important device for activating all accessible knowledge about the text and its context. It is the process of search, collection, selection, and contrast itself which activates this knowledge without having to take recourse to lengthy background explanations.

It may seem paradoxical that students who are not yet very advanced in the foreign language can be asked to take part in such a selection procedure, since if they already understood what they are choosing there would be no need to teach them anything. But this is not really a paradox at all. Not understanding a text is very different from not being able to say if it may be good, important, interesting or to guess from situational cues what it is likely to comprise. A native speaker also decides whether or not to pursue a particular article, buy a book, watch a film on limited prior knowledge. Teaching students how to anticipate the kind of thing to be expected from a text without prior reading of anything but the most restricted few sentences is therefore one of the most important methodological devices at this stage, anticipating and supporting the more systematic predictions of strategy 2.

Predicting the text

Strategy No 2

At the beginning of this paper I briefly referred to the lack of predictability of the utterance. There is however a kind of predictability which is a function of the relationship between the social context of language and the text itself. Michael Halliday provides a most useful summary of these relationships:

> The linguistic system ...is organised in such a way that the social context is predictive of the text. This is what makes it possible for a member to make the necessary predictions about the meanings that are being exchanged in any situation which he encounters. If we drop in on a gathering, we are able to tune in very quickly, because we size up the field, tenor and mode of the situation and at once form an idea of what is likely to be

> meant. In this way we know what semantic configurations - what register - will probably be required if we are to take part. If we did not do this, there would be no communication ... We succeed in the exchange of meaning because we have access to the semiotic structure of the situation from other sources.
>
> (Halliday 1978, p 189)

This possibility of predicting from an awareness of field, tenor, and mode the types of meanings to be exchanged is the key to understanding. The learner must understand some but not all of the relationships between social context and language. This is a practical task aimed at the learner's need to recuperate a text outside the social context in which it originally occurred. Only those relations between social context and text which a non-native speaker can actively, easily and efficiently use to predict likely meanings in the text will be used. The fact that deeper relations exist is of no practical consequence. We do not ask: how are situational components realised in detail in the semantic configurations of the text? Instead we ask: assuming we understand the field, tenor and mode which gave rise to this particular text in front of us, what do we expect it to say and how? The focus is thus essentially a strategic one. Predicting the register in those areas of text realisation which the learners considered prior implies an activation of the prior knowledge of all three parameters. For example, if we chose a text in order to extract its information (field dominated) how much of its content can we predict by making use of our knowledge prior to the actual reading of that text? Or, how can a juxtaposition of texts of related topics but from different sources help us to predict elements of how the texts are linguistically organised. Again this is best illustrated by classroom examples.

Example 2: 'Janz Berlin is eene Wolke.' (Spiegel, 9, 1985, p88-96)

How a group of science students with a weak O Level/CSE standard of German had arrived at the choice of this particular text about pollution in Berlin was just explained. Their selection was not influenced by linguistic difficulty and length of the article, both of which by far exceeded their linguistic capacity, but by their interest in the topic (pollution) as well as their attraction to the source (Spiegel). None of the students thought it at all likely that they could be made to understand even

the most general gist of an article of such complexity. However, since the work was not their individual but a group responsibility they were prepared to go along with the tasks out of sheer curiosity.

Because of all the previous work with the magazines the text was not entirely new. The students knew a little bit about what sort of magazine the Spiegel is, had analysed its presumed readership, and they understood the position of the text inside the magazine. In other words they had some understanding of the tenor and mode of the text, and its environment from previous work. The question which was then to be answered in group work was: given you know text type, source, readership, and given your interest in the topic of pollution, which areas do you expect the text to cover. The prediction of what the text might say was aided by the group's evaluation of the easy clues which the text gave: pictures, headlines, subtitles.

The following information was gleaned in this way:

Picture 1	Pollution in Berlin is important election topic for all political parties, from the 'alternatives' to the conservatives
Picture 2	Pollution in Berlin causes illness
Picture 3	Pollution in Berlin is connected with pollution in the GDR
Picture 4	Politicians are wanting to show their interest in new ecological measures: the new petrol
Picture 5	Young people demonstrate against pollution in East and West
Picture 6	Factories as source of pollution
Picture 7	Demonstration against pollution through cars.

From this the students expected to find the following type of information in the text:

1. Smog/pollution. Details about causes in general, and in relation to Berlin in particular. Comparison to other cities. Unusual geographical and political position of Berlin. Involvement of the GDR.

2. Effects on health. Types of illnesses suspected to arise from pollution. Different opinions about relationship polution/health.

3. Reaction of the public, complaints, organised opposition: high profile of topic amongst general public.

4. Reactions of politicians. Importance of topic for all political parties. Question of who is to blame. Different directions of arguments according to political persuasion.

In very general terms these were the results of the initial predictions. Obviously they did not emerge in such a neatly organised fashion. Nor were they all restricted to topics. Given the awareness the students had acquired of the relationship between situational components and language both as a general phenomenon and a particular one as regards the Spiegel, they expected for example a certain bias in the way the topic would be covered, even before the juxtaposition of the Spiegel text with others on similar topics but from different sources had thematised such conclusions. They also assumed a critical stand to the arguments which within the text the politicians were likely to produce. It should be obvious at this stage of my argument that the distinction between field, tenor and mode cannot and need not be clear cut. Since the register of the text is determined by all three the students will become increasingly aware of the way a text reflects the tenor and mode dimensions, and will seize any opportunity to thus stand back from the text as a pure source of information.

Testing the predictions

The following strategies will only briefly be referred to:

Strategy No 3: checking the predictions against the text, and

Strategy No 4: isolating areas of the text which were not predicted or which were falsely predicted.

These subsequent stages consisted of checking whether any of the predicted topics did in effect occur, in which order, in which length. Also to see which parts of the article were not covered by these predictions. In groups of two the students divided the text up into paragraphs with subtitles. This information was later exchanged amongst the group and a preferred division was negotiated. Each group then tried to extract at least five key facts from one of the sections. This information was again pooled, and provided the grid for the gist reading of the text which the students did at home. The results were reported in the following session, and took the form of listing the most important information the text had provided. All students achieved a high level of comprehension of the key facts reported in the text, even though many details of the descriptions remained obscure. This, in contrast to the following article from Bild der Wissenschaft, was later established as a typical feature of reading Spiegel texts, especially Spiegel 'stories'. Students were prepared to tolerate the non-comprehension of whole sections (see for example the typical personalised introductions of all Spiegel stories) without any fear of losing the gist. On the other hand, the same methodological devices of predict - search - focus key points - gist read - summarise - used on a text of similar topic but different source enabled them to understand almost every part of the highly factual contrast article from Bild der Wissenschaft. The insights about text organisation, style, complexities of sentences, etc, gleaned from this juxtaposition of texts using tenor and mode rather than field criteria were in turn fed into the analysis. From this emerged not only an awareness of the different reading styles which different texts require, but also an awareness of the different ways with which a native speaker would approach such texts. Whereas students saw an overlap in their way of understanding the scientific Bild der Wissenschaft article with that of German readers, there was no such similarity in their reception of the Spiegel article. Although they could deduce from the comparison of different texts that the narrative structure and the language of a Spiegel story was geared to entertain, sensationalise, provide responses from its readers, they could not themselves turn into such readers.

Only after a meta-assessment of how texts present meaning could responses be elicited which were comparable to those of an analyst rather than a reader of Spiegel stories. In other words, although no identification is implied between a linguist and a language learner, the latter does require an analytic response which is different from the one the native speaker/reader is likely to have. By definition the foreign language learner needs the double perspective of placing on the one hand what the text sets out to do, and on the other, understanding what it means to them. Initially an understanding of the text has to take place in the only terms which the learner has available, ie an engagement with a text alienated from its social base. The learner's reasons for choosing to understand a particular text may therefore be very different from the way the implied reader is encoded in the text. S/he needs a metaposition in order to differentiate the outsider from the insider view.

Contrasting the knowledge which the learner has consciously acquired about the text with the response a native reader is likely to have or is meant to have is thus a vital aspect of comprehending discourse outside its natural setting. It is also part of education in general. It means for example learning how to resist the invitation of a manipulative text (an advert for example) as a result of the understanding that there is such an invitation encoded in the text. This is a semiotic process, where learning a language and learning about a language becomes impossible to separate: a making conscious of what native speakers do - largely unconsciously. But it is done practically, project based, as guided discovery by the students themselves in and through the medium of the foreign language.

Juxtaposing texts

The example just presented was to highlight how large topical units of a text could be predicted by the students through an activation of their knowledge of field, tenor and mode dimensions of the text. It was also to show how through deliberate juxtaposition with other texts an awareness was developed of how any one of those texts could most easily be read or understood. Gist reading, that is reading for information, is made very much easier if students are actively aware of how tenor and mode dimensions influence the language of the text. Other examples with can only be hinted at here would show how a juxtaposition of two texts of similar topic and type of medium but contrasting readership can help

isolate linguistic features which influence the readers' response to these texts. So the model can be activated not only in relation to propositional knowledge but also in the predicting and understanding of attitudes presupposed and reinforced by the text. Comparing two articles on the same topic from two similar types of German newspapers enabled the students not only to extract the relevant information but also to direct their attention to exactly those micro features of language which would influence a reader's assessment of that information. (Such a comparative task is illustrated in a textbook by Meinhof & Rach, 1981, pp28-29.) Students through a foreign language thus develop insights about evaluation through language without any theoretical exposition, but purely through a method of self-discovery. That bias is not necessarily residing in deliberately false information but can be hidden behind connotations of verbs, qualifiers, conjunctions, different positioning of information is an important discovery not just about the foreign language, but also about one's mother tongue. Learning a language and learning about language is thus again combined in one consistent teaching unit.

The deliberate juxtaposition of texts, where one of the situational parameters for field, tenor and mode is contrasted whilst the other two are held constant is both a result of the prediction of likely meanings and part of the methodology of discourse comprehension. Without some prediction as to what a text is likely to comprise no juxtaposition is possible. But without juxtaposition, taken only as separate text, there is no guide as to how to locate or evaluate key phrases which direct a reader's reception of the information. This last point applies of course to a large extent to native speakers, too, who are not usually able to detect by which linguistic means they are led to believe certain items of information. The strategies of comprehending and assessing texts through deliberate contrastive reading should thus not be restricted to the foreign language.

This paper has shown how through an activation of students' knowledge of the situational parameters of field, tenor and mode certain aspects of the texts could be predicted. This process of activating prior knowledge was a direct result of an approach which laid bare the reasons for the choice of these texts in the first place. By allowing the students to take part in the selection process, prior knowledge was maximised. This also

minimised the possibility of bypassing their interest whilst at the same time the unavoidable preselection of possible text sources by the teacher (TV programmes, newspapers, magazines, books, pictures, etc) ensured the link with the sociocultural teaching goals. This combination of maximum topical interest on the side of the students in the chosen texts with a maximum knowledge of situational parameters allowed the formulation of predictions to be brought to the text before actually beginning with the detailed reading. As was shown in the examples, the predictions formed the basis of sets of divergent and effective comprehension strategies.

Cognitive parallels

These strategies are of course of a pedagogical nature. They are pretheoretical in the sense that their success was shown in the methodology of enabling the students to comprehend original texts where the linguistic level would otherwise have been prohibitive. They do not claim to represent a cognitive theory of discourse comprehension in general, though there are tantalising similarities to the strategic comprehension of discourse at macrostructural level as postulated by van Dijk and W Kintsch. Their recent study Strategies of Discourse Comprehension (1983) replaces earlier structural models of discourse understanding by a strategic one. Comprehension is seen as dynamic and process-oriented, which takes place 'on line', that is gradually together with the processing of input, and not with hindsight, after all input data have been assembled (p5). This processing is multilevel, integrating the 'comprehender's existing world knowledge with the information derived from the text that is being processed' (x). However although large amounts of knowledge are activated in the process of comprehension, this activation, too is strategic.

> 'Instead of a more or less blind activation of all possible knowledge, in the understanding of a word, a clause, or the construction of a global theme, we assume that the use of knowledge is strategic, depending on the goals of the language user, the amounts of available knowledge from text and context ...' (p13)

The strategies which are used by the comprehender are thus flexible, adjustable according to task and interest. They are strategies of the cognitive system and as such largely unconscious, often automatic. But they have all been learned. Some of these are learned very early, hand in hand with the process of language acquisition by the child (ie word and clause comprehension). Others, especially macrostrategies such as gist reading, and schematic strategies such as, for example, the understanding of the structure of a particular narrative form are acquired late or need specialist training. It is these latter strategies, the macro and schematic strategies which coincide in their theoretical formulation with my pedagogic strategies.

Such a coincidence may have significant consequences for foreign language teaching in general:

1. If the ability to formulate macrostrategies and thus establish global coherence of discourse is an essential element of comprehension, then this would have to include the comprehension of discourse in a foreign language. It should be obvious that the foreign language learner in an average classroom, confronted with either pedagogic texts or isolated originals would be incapable of forming any hypothesis about the discourse in front of them. None of the requirements which enable contextual searches are there at all, because of the way discourse is either adapted, selected, or represented for teaching purposes. But equally, the purely textual strategies are undervalued because of the way discourse is normally presented and approached.

2. If comprehension is a result of the establishment of both global and local coherence it requires the ability to isolate propositions in the discourse on all levels from the sentence to the discourse as a whole through the integration of all possible knowledge available, including 'world knowledge'. If the knowledge is restricted because of the isolation of the text from its normal setting students will rely on lexicogrammatical knowledge as their only key to the text. Because of the limitations of lexicogrammatical knowledge in the foreign

language reading for meaning is impaired even at the local level.

3. Comprehension strategies can work on partial knowledge if all possible knowledge is activated before and during the processing of the discourse. The methodology of text selection which was the condition for the formulation of pedagogic strategies of text prediction and verification can thus be seen as a frame for activating cognitive knowledge. But instead of these processes taking place on an unconscious even automatic level as in the understanding of native discourse, my model provides a conscious, actively learnable correlate for the comprehension of non-native discourse.

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